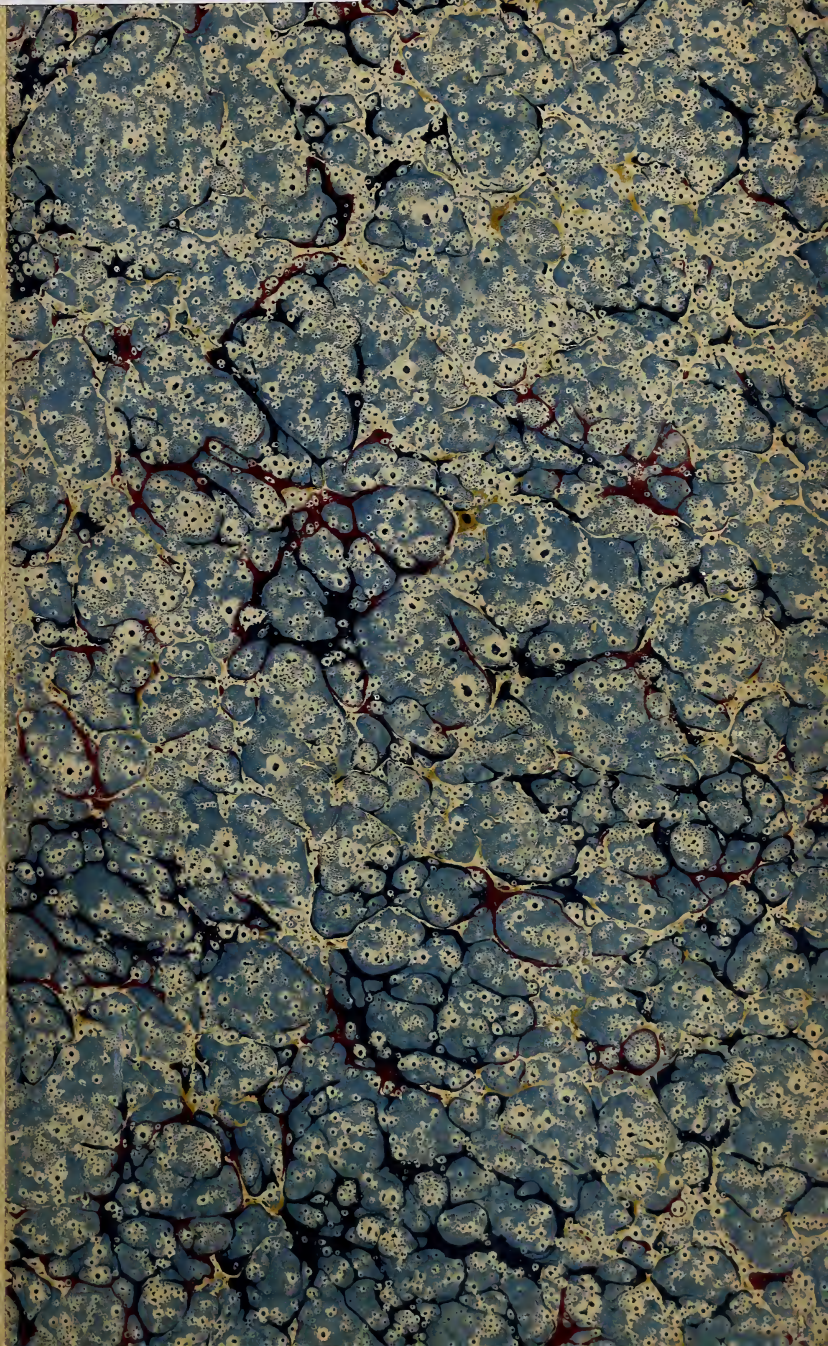


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ON

CHURCH MUSIC, 1851)

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BY

LOWELL (MASON.)

New-York:

MASON & LAW, 23 PARK ROW,

BOSTON: J. P. JEWETT & CO.

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JOHN A. GRAY,

PRINTER,

78 FULTON, COR. GOLD ST., NEW-YORK.

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INTRODUCTION.

Mutilated Dec 19, 1912

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det Dominum." The shield on the left is similar to that on the right, and bears the inscription, "*Laus Deo.*" The scroll on the reverse is occupied by an elegantly engraved church organ. The shield on its right is occupied by a music book, handsomely executed, bearing the inscription, "H. & H. SOCT. COLLECTION, 1822." this being the title of the first book of church music published by Mr. Mason. The other shield bears a similar book, engraved with the words, "CANTICA LAUDIS, 1850." This is the title of the last book published by Mr. Mason.

The vase cost about \$200, and as we before remarked is a beautiful specimen of elaborately wrought and highly finished silver ware."

Address.

Fellow Choir-Members, Pupils and Friends:

The circumstances under which we are assembled seem to say to us, "One generation passeth away and another cometh;" "the places that now know us shall know us no more;" even though life be continued, its occupations may change, and the dearest connections and friendships are uncertain and insecure. We are, indeed, taught these lessons by daily occurrences, and he who has not learned that there is no stability in worldly pursuits, nor permanence in worldly pleasures, has made but little progress in human experience. But when, looking back upon the past, we meet as we now meet, knowing that we can never come together again under like circumstances, we can hardly prevent thoughts in relation to our condition and prospects most solemn and affecting. I have often looked upon a season of severe illness as a most important event in one's life, compelling seriousness and meditation; and so, also, occasions like the present can hardly fail to bring one to a momentary pause, to reflection and self-examination. Where am I? where have I been? where am I going? are questions deeply important, which naturally arise in the mind, and from which there seems to be no escape.

Were it proper, it would be pleasant to dwell upon such a train of thought as this, and to press it home upon every one present; but it comes not within the sphere of a music teacher to do this; it rather belongs to him who, bearing the sacred office, teaches, on holy day, of life, death and immortality. Besides, a different course has been suggested, and is expected on this occasion.

Having been engaged for more than forty years in teaching and leading the music of the Church, (nearly twenty-five of which have been spent in this city,) and having (principally on account of ill health) felt it to be a duty to withdraw from these labors, which have been so steadily pursued, because so ardently loved, kind friends and fellow-laborers have appointed this meeting; *they*, who have been to me in my weakness as were the unshorn locks of the son of Manoaah to the champion of Israel, have called me before you on this occasion, and have suggested that the topic shall be the state and progress of Music in this vicinity, during the last quarter of a century.

I can only glance at a few of the more prominent points; and this I shall do mostly by a statement of facts, leaving my hearers to make the contrast between Psalmody as it was at the commencement of that period, and as it now is; but before I proceed, I will allude to some previous essays at reformation.

It is now somewhat more than fifty years since an attempt was made on the part of several clergymen—one of whom, venerable and beloved, still lives, (Rev. Dr. Dana of Newburyport)—to rid the churches of the miserable musical trash which, in the form of tunes, then almost universally prevailed, and to bring in a better, though an older style of church music. This effort was in a considerable degree successful, and introduced partial reform in some congregations.

The choir of the then youthful and enterprising Park-street Church, under the direction of its able leader, Mr. Elnathan Duren, was also a pioneer in the good work. Rejecting the worthless tunes which then prevailed, and substituting for them the better style which had been resuscitated and republished, the influence of this choir was excellent and extensive. From this choir, too, in a great degree, sprang up the Handel and Haydn Society. This institution was organized in 1815 ; and although *in its performances* it had but little reference to Psalmody, yet its influence upon musical taste was immediately and extensively felt. The Messiah of Handel and the Creation of Haydn were now heard for the first time in Boston, and such select or miscellaneous oratorios or concerts of excellent music were performed, as had a direct tendency to advance musical knowledge, and to lead to truth in musical taste.

Some ten years after the organization of the Handel and Haydn Society, or about a quarter of a century ago, a few young men became convinced that some special efforts were due to the cause of Psalmody. They were satisfied that for some reason or other the legitimate devotional effects of song in the house of God were not fully realized, and that it was not made, as it ought to be, a means of spiritual edification. These persons were not professional musicians, nor were all of them choir-members or chorus-singers. They were influenced by no special love for musical art or science, nor by any mercenary motives, but took up the subject as a matter of religious privilege and duty. Nor did they regard the subject as beneath their notice or dignity, nor as inconsistent with their character as religious men. They did not excuse themselves by the plea that they could not sing, or that they had not learned music ; but feeling that they, themselves, had something to do in the matter, they gave it the necessary

time, met together for consultation, and made the personal efforts and the pecuniary offerings which seemed to be required; and this notwithstanding they were also deeply interested and actively engaged in the various benevolent enterprises of the day. They thought that Psalmody should not be an isolated thing, a mere musical exercise, separate, distinct, and having little or nothing to do with the spirituality of worship; but that it should be regarded as a part of the service, and as *that* part which, of all others, *ought* most to draw out, revive, and quicken the affections.

I do not know of any company of young men, or of old ones, who are *now* thus engaged. I do not know of any church where there seems to be an intelligent and general desire to experience the *religious* effects of church music. Money is indeed more freely given now than formerly; the knowledge of music has much increased, tunes are better, and all the outward circumstances of the service have been improved; but, while these wells of salvation have been thus widened and deepened, and while all men have wherewith to obtain the waters, where are they who thirsting *draw*, that they may drink and be refreshed?

It will be observed that they of whom I speak directed their attention to the subject of *Church Music*, and not to that of mere musical improvement. They were, indeed, lovers of music, and friendly to its general cultivation; but it was in music as directly connected with *religious worship*, that they desired to awaken an interest and exert an influence.

It is often from want of a proper practical understanding of this distinction, if we err not, that efforts professedly for improvement in Psalmody fail of accomplishing their end; and sometimes sacred music societies, and church choirs too, professedly aiming at improvement in church music, stop short of this, and are satisfied with mere musical progress or

gratification. *Musical Societies* are generally made up of musical men ; and if religious men are included, they are there *musically* and not *religiously*. We are not to look then to mere musical societies for *all* that is needed to advance the cause of church music. On the other hand, where *churches*, or associations of religious persons *as such*, are willing or desirous of doing what they can in this work, they often fail for want of musical knowledge. Both *musical knowledge* and *religious principle and feeling* are equally necessary to success in the well-ordering and conducting of the music of worship.

One of the immediate results of the efforts of which we have spoken, was the removal of him who now addresses you to this city, and the commencement of his labors as teacher and conductor of church music. These labors, so far as they relate to the charge of the music on the Sabbath, have been connected with different churches as follows :

Two years and a half, divided between the Essex street, Hanover street, and Park street churches, then under the pastoral care of Rev. S. Green, Rev. Dr. Lyman Beecher, and Rev. Dr. Edward Beecher ; *fourteen years* in Bowdoin street church, under the pastoral care of Rev. Dr. Lyman Beecher and Rev. Hubbard Winslow ; and *seven and a half years* in Central church, under the pastoral care of Rev. Wm. M. Rogers and Rev. George Richards.

It is a matter of grateful recollection that, in all my intercourse with these gentlemen, whether official or of a more private and social character, there has never been an unkind word spoken ; nor do I believe that an unkind thought has ever arisen to interrupt the perfect harmony that has always existed between the pastor and the precentor.

The circumstances were now most favorable for improvement in church music, and indeed for improvement in any

thing connected with the progress of religious things ; for the Hanover (now Bowdoin) street church had been recently organized, and never had there been before in the city such a body of young men brought together in church relationship. The *Dr. Beecher*, too, (who, thank God, has not yet finished his work on earth,) had been called, and had just entered upon his course of ministerial labor ; and there was a promptness, zeal, and activity around him, a coming up to his support, aiding, cheering, sustaining, which, together with the pastor's wakefulness and energy, *insured success*. The graces of Christians were revived, their activity quickened, and their expectations enlarged. Glorious things had been spoken of Zion, and there was a strong desire that her harps should be taken down from the willows, and tuned anew to songs of penitence and praise. There is no danger of church music, when there is an active state of the religious affections, though some degree of musical knowledge is always necessary to guide the taste. With the degree of musical knowledge and taste now existing in the community, I think it may be safely said, that nothing is wanting to the prosperity of this cause but *deep religious feeling*, for where this is, songs of praise must be also ; heaven itself could not exist without them.

But it is time that I should point out some particular things connected, not so much, perhaps, with the *spirit* of sacred song, as with musical knowledge and taste, as they existed at that time. I have already spoken of the Handel and Haydn Society ; but much as had been done by this now venerable society, (for a musical society is venerable and gray-headed at thirty-six,) and notwithstanding the great improvement which it had made in the performance of music, there were certain deficiencies or deformities, even in its concert performances, which would now be regarded as altogether inexcusable, even in an humble church choir.

For example, the *soprano* was always led off, and in a great degree sustained, by *tenor* voices, and a certain number of men were appointed to the office of *soprano leaders*. The women (I like the old Bible word) could not tell when to take up a fugal point, or where to carry it, or when it should stop; nor could they strike the difficult or *easy* intervals, with certainty, without aid; but, as in things pertaining to common life, where it is *right*, so in *chorus-singing*, where it is NOT RIGHT, did they look up to man for guidance and support. But this disagreeable effect of a *soprano* by *tenor* voices an octave lower than the true pitch, inverting the harmony, producing forbidden progressions, perverting the meaning of the passage, and often "growling down in the region of the base," was not appreciated or felt, for there was a lack of musical knowledge.

Again, the *alto* of women's voices, now universal, was then unknown. No woman sung the *alto*; such a thing had not been heard of. The *alto*, when there was any, was sung by men's voices; but as there were only two or three men who attempted to sing this part, its effect was almost lost to the chorus.

The number of chorus-singers was small in comparison to what it now is. The Society included almost all the chorus-singers in the town who could read music, and certainly some who could *not* read music, and yet the number of voices seldom exceeded a hundred.

But now, while this Society consists of some two hundred and fifty members, we have also the Musical Education Society, equally large, besides many smaller associations and singing-clubs, meeting frequently for the practice of Handel, Mozart, Beethoven and Mendelssohn.

Church choirs were still more imperfect; and this with respect to their organization, to the adequate number of voices,

to the proper balance of the parts, and even to the *existence* of those parts ; for as the alto of women's voices was not known, and as there were but very few men who ever attempted to sing the part, it was most generally omitted, so that there were seldom but three parts, and often but two attempted in a chorus.

The *treble* in the church choirs, as in the Handel and Haydn Society, was sung in whole or in part by men's voices, and the tenor was often sung by women's voices, thus inverting the order of nature, and separating, by two full octaves, those who were made to go hand in hand, helps meet for one another, in chorus form, as in domestic life.

Again, in respect to modulation or change of key, it may be remarked that it received from vocalists but little *practical* attention ; so that in a change from the key of C to that of G, (for example,) the tone F sharp would not be given by the voices, but, while the instrumentalists struck F sharp, the vocalists would sing F, thus producing a chord so dissonant as to cause the nerves of the most insensible to the jargon of unequal vibrations to tremble.

Again, the condition of church music presents a very different appearance at the present day from what it did twenty-five years ago, in respect to accompaniment. The accompaniment then, in most churches, was that of single-stringed or wind instruments. The Episcopal, and several of the Unitarian churches, had organs. The Old South congregation, too, had procured their fine, large instrument ; but, with this exception, there was no organ in the Orthodox Congregational, Baptist, Methodist, Universalist, or other churches. Nor was the piano-forte, as an instrument for the aid of choir-practice, then known, not a single vestry being furnished with the instrument now common to almost all, and regarded as an almost necessary piece of church furniture.

Again, with respect to the singing at social religious meetings, in the lecture-room or vestry, the change has not only been great but highly satisfactory ; for at the time to which we refer, it was common on such occasions to attempt a choir performance. I have seen some eight or ten persons rise when the hymn was given out, and with pitch-pipe or tuning-fork and singing-books in hand, attempt what might be in truth regarded as the burlesque choral service of a social religious meeting. Happily the singing on all such occasions has now become congregational ; and I cannot but add, happy will it be, when to a much greater extent than at present, in connection with a choir, this good old form of the service of song shall be renewed, and prevail in the more dignified and formal assembly for public worship on the Sabbath. Then will Church Music arise in her strength and beauty, when *all* the people shall open their mouths and speak forth the gratitude of their hearts in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs unto the Lord.

There has been another change, perhaps greater than all ; which, though it be less directly connected with church music, must not be omitted. I refer to music among children. It is not too much to say that twenty-five years ago, singing among children, as a common thing, was unknown in the country. There were a few who, with remarkable ear and voice, had given some attention to the subject, or rather who, without having given attention to it, were singers ; some, who, like the bird in Jenny Lind's song, sang without knowing why they were singing, but who still must be singing—nature's singing, spontaneous, and not to be suppressed ;—but children did not generally sing, nor was it supposed to be possible to teach them, or that they had the ability to sing.

On this subject I feel particularly interested ; and as I think

I may humbly claim to be, in some sense, the father of singing among the children in this country, I may be permitted briefly to touch upon a few of the leading points in its history.

Knowing by experience the value of an *alto of children's voices* in a church choir, and finding that this part was not usually sung or even attempted in the Boston choirs, it became an immediate object to train a class of boys and girls for it. Hence the first children's singing-school. And with the exception of the teaching a few children the elements of music in connection with writing, in the writing academy of Mr. N. D. Gould, in Franklin street, and the few Jenny Lind's bird-like children who occasionally found their way into the adult singing-schools, these were the first efforts in children's music. The class did not at first consist of more than six or eight, but these acted at once voluntarily as missionaries; and the increase was rapid, until the room was filled. This class, which afterwards, in a large place, increased to five or six hundred, was continued *gratuitously* for six or eight years, or until it was taken up by the Boston Academy of Music, by which society it was sustained until music was introduced into the grammar schools of the city.

Soon after these beginnings of music among the children had been made, the Rev. William C. Woodbridge, the well-known geographer, and editor of the *Annals of Education*, the warm friend of education and of music in schools, arrived in this country after several years' residence in Germany, where he had been qualifying himself to act with more enlightened views and a more extended influence upon the educational interests of his native land.

Mr. Woodbridge, although he had never learned music himself, was the warm friend of singing among children, and immediately commenced efforts for extending it here. In

1830 he delivered a lecture in Boston before the "American Institute of Instruction," in which he advocated the introduction of music into the common schools. Through his efforts, many gentlemen became interested in the subject, and soon several of the most distinguished private schools adopted it. He brought with him from Germany the books explaining the inductive system of teaching, then wholly unknown here, and even now but little understood; and also various collections of songs for children, by Nageli, and other philanthropic laborers in the cause in Germany and Switzerland. These songs he helped to translate, and in 1831, "The Juvenile Lyre," the first children's music-book, was published; concerts, or exhibitions of juvenile singing, soon followed; and at length, on the 8th of January, 1833, and growing directly out of these exertions, was formed the "Boston Academy of Music." The general object of this society was to promote music and universal musical education. Its truly disinterested and benevolent character will not be questioned by any one who knows that the following named gentlemen constituted its first government:—

JACOB ABBOTT, President.

DAVID GREEN, Vice-President.

GEORGE WM. GORDON, Recording Secretary.

W. C. WOODBRIDGE, Corresponding Secretary.

JULIUS A. PALMER, Treasurer.

DANIEL NOYES,	WM. J. HUBBARD,	} Counsellors.
BELA HUNTING,	GEO. H. SNELLING,	
HORATIO M. WILLIS,	BENJAMIN PERKINS,	
J. S. WITHINGTON,	MOSES GRANT,	
GEORGE E. HEAD,	WM. W. STONE,	

Gentlemen, mercantile, professional and literary, who, though not themselves musicians, and having no pecuniary interest in the object whatever, enlisted voluntarily in the cause of musical education.

It may be proper to remark here, that while the original design of the young men whose exertions have been noticed

extended to church music only, the representations of Mr. Woodbridge, the great interest now felt in children's music, and other considerations, had so far influenced them, and also the other gentlemen who united in the formation of the Academy, that the institution was made to embrace a more extensive field than the one department. The subject was discussed, and it was thought best to organize a society which should contemplate general musical improvement and education.

In 1835, Mr. Samuel A. Eliot accepted the Presidency of the Academy. Entering, as he did, upon the duties of the office with the zeal, and pursuing them with the wisdom, energy and perseverance for which he is so highly distinguished, it is not surprising that in 1838, Mr. Eliot being Mayor of the city, and chairman of the School Committee, music was introduced as one of the regular studies into the public grammar schools of Boston.

The example of Boston has been followed far and wide, so that now music is taught in many public schools throughout the Union. The result already is, that a multitude of young persons have been raised up, who, to say the least, are much better able to appreciate and to perform music than were their fathers; and experience proves that large classes of young persons, capable of reading music with much accuracy, may be easily gathered in almost any part of New-England, or indeed of the United States.

There are those who were pupils when music was introduced into the Boston schools, who are now organists and conductors of church music; and those who, having passed from the Latin School through a regular collegiate course of study, are now devoting themselves to the profession of music. The music at the late city celebration of the 4th of July, by a choir from the Public Schools, was conducted by one who,

but a few years ago was a boy, singing and leading in a similar choir, under the direction of the speaker. When music was first introduced into the schools, there was but one person who could be found who would attempt to teach, and for several years but one other engaged in the work with success ; but now there are many young men—as many as there are schools, and more too—prepared and willing to teach. May the spirit of Pestalozzi, of Nageli, and of Woodbridge rest upon them all !

There is not time to speak of other measures of the Academy. It is still living, though, since its children have grown up around it, as it never desired to exhibit itself, it has gradually retired from most of its active labors, leaving younger ones to carry on the work which it commenced. The Musical Education Society, the Musical Fund Society, Music in the Schools, Musical Conventions, and Teachers' Classes, are among its legitimate offspring, and are its legal heirs and representatives. The inheritance which they may possess is not one of silver and gold, but it is a spirit of universal musical improvement. This they are bound to receive and cherish. Be it theirs, children and children's children for ever.

There are other topics connected with the progress of music during the past twenty-five years, and with its present state and prospects, on which it might be pleasant and useful to dwell, but these must be omitted ; and I will only trespass longer upon your patience by a few words more immediately connected with the present occasion.

I thank you, fellow choir-members, pupils and friends, for this unexpected testimony of your confidence and affection. To those who have been my pupils I would say, "*You are my jewels.*" I love to think of you, and of your lessons ; of the eagerness with which you would strive to overcome the

difficulties that presented themselves in the clusters of notes upon the blackboard, and of the joy that beamed upon your countenances when you first felt that you had conquered ; of your crowding around your teacher to take hold of his hand, and to catch words of encouragement and approbation from his lips. I love to think of your bouquets and new year's presents. I love your bows, and greetings, and kindly words, as I now meet you from time to time. These kindly words and cheerful smiles of former pupils are *green spots* in a teacher's life, *fragrant* and *refreshing*.

I love to hum over the beautiful little songs which I have so often heard you sing, when the Children's Singing-schools were first established—"Charming Little Valley," "Little Cooling Meadow Spring," "Oh, Come to the Garden," and many others. I love these songs more and more, the older I grow ; and I doubt not, the longer I live, in the possession of my mental faculties, the more I shall delight in them.

If the songs of children are pure in sentiment and truthful in musical taste, they will live for ever. I doubt not that the spirit of these little joyful songs of children will dwell in the hearts of the good, and help to swell the sublime chorus of the heavenly world.

Many of us have been associated, and some for a long time as choir-members. We shall not soon forget the pleasant hours we have spent together ; neither the preparatory meetings, nor the Sabbath assemblies.

The Saturday evening choir-meetings will long dwell in our memory, and we shall often recall the hours devoted to musical practice, or preparation for the Sabbath. The vestry cheerfully lighted, the happy arrival greetings, the seats arranged and books distributed in choral form, the call to order, the seating, the first tones of the instrument, the page, the tune, the time, the song blending harmonious ; the sacred

lyric defining the emotions already awakened, the various forms of musical expression—now the energetic, bold, and sforzando, exciting to joy, victory and exultation ; and now the cantabile, legato, and sostenuto, calming to gentleness, quietness and repose ; the piano, the forte, the crescendo, the diminuendo, the cadence, the close,—all shall send a thrill of joy in the recollection through the soul.

The criticisms and fault-finding, too ; the errors pointed out, illustrated and caricatured ; the corrections, reproofs and rebukes, though cutting and severe, yet well deserved and well received, shall be a memento of the love and confidence which has dwelt in the choir. Nor shall the exercises of more direct praise and prayer be forgotten, in which we have never omitted to unite when the hour of our social singing had passed away, and which, we believe, have often aided in preparation for the solemn assembly of the Sabbath.

And surely the remembrance of the Sabbath, with its supplications, its praises, and its teachings, shall not be lost. The gathering of the people, old and young, parents and children, teachers and pupils, friends and strangers, cheerful and happy, mournful and afflicted ; the man of God entering the sacred desk, the first burstings of the deep diapason chorus, when the full organ proclaims that *God is here*, and that the hour of worship has arrived, summoning the spirit to communion with its Maker ; all these and other circumstances are deeply engraven upon memory's tablet, and associated with some of the precious moments of our existence.

And then, after the prayers and Scripture readings, and when the choir service has been announced, as ministers of the songs of Zion we have risen, and lifted up the high chorus of praise and adoration. How often, under such circumstances, upon the commingled tones of our voices, have the hearts

of pious worshippers ascended to the throne of the Eternal, blending with the Hallelujahs of the redeemed !

Were our hearts there too ? for it is fitting that this also should be remembered. Whose conscience does not reprove him ? Whose conscience does not tell him that he has too often dwelt upon the time, the tune, the hymn, the expression, the mere technicals or mechanism of the service, to the exclusion of the *spirit* of the song ? I do not suppose that choir-members are more guilty in this respect than others : the members of the congregation are equally in fault ; nor is the singing the only exercise in public worship which too often degenerates into a mere formal offering, but both in the prayers and in the praises, in the choir and in the pew, are we too apt to rest in the mere external, and lose the reality of worship.

Let there be remembrances then that shall be mingled with sorrow and contrition ; remembrances, whose tones of penitence shall cry for pardon, as well as those whose grateful songs shall speak of joy and gladness.

There are but few circumstances which I can call to my remembrance, connected with my experience as Conductor of a Choir, which do not afford pleasure in the review. I speak not now of the spiritual, for here indeed there is abundant reason for confession and self-abasement ; but I refer rather to the choir organization, and its social condition. I can truly assert that my own experience contradicts the common saying that of all organizations, a singing choir is the most difficult to control. I have not found it so. I do not mean to say that the stream has been always equally smooth and gentle in its flowings, but I have always found it possible to calm the agitated waters ; and whenever I have failed to control the choir, it has been because I have failed to control myself. Learn a lesson from this, ye who conduct choirs !

Control yourselves, and you will be able to control your choirs also. It is not true that choir-members are worse than others, and there are (considering the circumstances) as many bickerings, and disputings, and wranglings among the lawyers and the doctors, and the—I had almost said—ministers, as there are among the singers.

It is not to be denied, however, that the members of a choir have their peculiar trials and temptations, and it is especially difficult in a work like theirs to *keep the heart*. They need aid and sympathy, and they should often be remembered and be encouraged, not only by their immediate friends, but by all who love and desire the welfare of Zion's songs.

But I must not prolong these remarks. Let us ever be glad when we hear the exhortation, "O come, let us sing unto the Lord ; let us heartily rejoice in the strength of our salvation."

Let Pastors, Choristers, and People, learn to regard this part of the Sabbath-day services as one of delightful and solemn worship, and let us all so engage in it from time to time, as not to incur the guilt of those who draw nigh unto God with their mouths and honor him with their lips, but whose hearts are far from him.

